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CARE CENTER FOR NEW MUSLIMS

A GLIMPSE OF ISLAMIC FAITH



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لمحة عن العقيدة الإسلامية

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ISLAMIC FAITH

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DEDICATION

* To the Searchers for Truth with an open mind and an enlightened heart...
* To those who are keen on saving themselves from going astray and living in the broad expanse of Light.
* To every man and woman desiring to know about Islam's attitude towards the major issues of DIVINITY, THE UNIVERSE and LIFE and about the position and role of man in the Universe.

I dedicate this quick glimpse of the Islamic Faith.

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Islam has liberated man from mental bondage and trained its followers to search for the truth with open minds. Allah has honoured the human mind and made it a means of discovering the tokens of His existence and glory in the universe and understanding His Glorious Revelation.

In the time when the non-Islamic world was suffering from the abyss of the so called Dark Ages, the Islamic world was already living in an age of enlightenment and had advanced in all fields of life-spiritual and material. That is, in fact, a

natural outcome of the living faith which is compatible with undefiled human nature.

When in action, the Islamic faith brings forth other honourable examples of human civilization and guides man to the Straight Path. This faith is summed up and pronounced in the following Arabic Words:

" أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله ، وأشهد أن محمدا رسول الله . "

It can be transliterated into Roman Letters as follows:

" ASH-HADU AN LA ILAHA ILLAL-LAAH, WA ASH-HADU ANNA MUHAMMADAN RASULUL-LAAH."

Its meaning in English is :

"I BEAR WITNESS THAT THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH; AND THAT MUHAMMAD IS HIS MESSENGER."

A brief explanation of the Muslim faith is given in the following pages. Yet this is only a glimpse for those who are interested to know about the articles of the Islamic Faith .It could also be a step forward on the way of studying and discussing the foundations of Islamic belief.

It could convince sincere searchers for the truth to embrace the true religion. An impartial assessment of their beliefs and practices should hopefully lead them to shift their stand and guide them to the only straight path (that is, Islam).

MAN'S NEED FOR THE CORRECT CREED.

Man stands at the peak of creation and holds the position of the master in this universe owing to the unique qualities he enjoys. He is provided with a number of faculties and qualities that enable him to control and build this world. He is endowed with sense to make him understand things and acquire knowledge. He is also provided with the means of power and control. He enjoys, too, a variety of emotions and feelings, such as love, hate, anger, etc..

These qualities are two-edged weapons that can be employed either for good or for evil purposes. Power, for example, can be used either for helping people and giving

them happiness or for wronging the weak and oppressing them. The human mind can be used either for inventing the means of luxury and comfort or for manufacturing the devices of death and destruction.

Therefore, there must be some other force or drive that is able to control these human qualities and faculties and direct them in the interest of man and his community. That is, the sound belief in the One and Only true God and His perfect attributes and in the resurrection after death when everybody is brought to account for his past deeds. This belief will be the main factor that leads man in the right path and keeps him away from evil and injustice. It helps to build a real ideal society as it was witnessed in the past when Islam was embodied in actual life

and the Muslim soceity was a concrete representation of the Islamic faith.

In fact, Allah does not need our belief in Him, nor does He need our worship and submission to His exalted Will; it is we who need this belief in order to be correct in our concept of life, the universe and its Creator, and to achieve our happiness and welfare both in this world and in the Hereafter.

MONOTHEISM IN ISLAM

ISLAM, in general, means surrendering one's whole self to Allah, getting rid of polytheism and complete submission to the orders and instructions of Allah.

Submission to Allah is a thing which Allah requires of the whole humanity as He is its Creator; He has created the whole universe and He alone dominates over it. It is the duty of creatures to their Creator and a requisite of their servility to their Lord.

Islam was the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham and other prophets up to Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon them), for their faith was one and the same, although the applied ethics

might be different.

The Islamic faith consists of six fundamentals:

1 - Belief in Allah.
2 - Belief in His Angels.
3 - Belief in Divine Books.
4 - Belief in His Prophets.
5 - Belief in the Last Day.
6 - Belief in Divine Destiny.

The first fundamental is the most import of all.

RELIGION AND HUMAN NATURE

(Belief in Allah)

Everyone is born upright by nature. Pure nature leads to Allah, the One and Only true God. In fact, human nature awakes to Almighty Allah's existence very early in life, even earlier than we may think. We generally think that only an older person ponders over Allah's existence and Oneness. But if we observe the life of a little child, we notice that in a certain stage of his life he asks his parents endless questions about the things he sees around him in the universe.

Who made the heaven? Why is the sky blue? Where does the sun go at night? Why doesn't it appear to us at night?

Where does light go when the dark comes? Why do stars glitter? Where does the earth end? Why does one flower have smell while another doesn't? Where did I come from? Where was I before I came? etc. What do all these questions mean and indicate?

They indicate that nature in this child has begun to awake and recognize the Creator of the earth and heavens through His tangible and seen creation. There are several effects that touch man's senses and awaken him to the fact of Allah's existence, Oneness and peerlessness. The universe, so vast and wide, would certainly awaken man to that plain fact. Those great dimensions in the skies and the earth... those countless, immense, celestial bodies... Who has created them? The

earth, though too tiny compared with other celestial bodies, contains mountains, plains, oceans, seas and rivers that would take the whole life of man to learn about a small part of them. How, then, about the solar system of which our earth is only a part? How about the milky way of which our solar system is considered a small part?. And other celestial masses which contain millions and millions of galaxies like ours? And millions and millions of stars in comparison with which the large sun is considered to be too small?

With all its bulkiness, the universe is marvellously accurate. Night and day follow each other so precisely that we adjust our watches to them. In fact, the whole universe is so exact in its astro-

nomical revolution that clocks in observatories, which are the most accurate clocks we have and to which clocks in broadcasting stations are adjusted, are themselves adjusted to the extremely accurate astronomical revolution which is never disturbed in the course of time unless, of course, Allah willed it otherwise.

Every being, animate and inanimate, enjoys such miraculous accuracy. Have you seen the extremely minute living cell that can be seen only under the microscope? Yet it grows, splits and performs highly wonderful tasks which make man helpless and humble towards the omnipotence of Allah! Who, other than Allah, has infused it with the secret of life and guided it to such surprising activity?

A germ cannot be seen with the unaided eye. A minute kind called 'virus' cannot be seen even under the ordinary microscope. Yet, you know from your studies in science that it might cause the most deadly disease unless man immunized himself against it by means of medicines and serums. The multicellular being, man at the top, was originally one impregnated cell which went on splitting and growing till it became an integral being. What power, other than that of Allah, has given it life and activity? Most surprising in that splitting process is the fact that those cells appear similar in their beginning, then orders are given to them to specialize and take certain forms - one cell moves to a certain place and becomes an ear or part of an ear; another cell goes to another position and becomes an eye or

part of it; a third becomes one of the brain cells; a fourth turns into bones... etc. What order did those invisible cells receive and obey in such extraordinary exactitude? It is the order of the Creator. He orders them and they obey Him, and move and form in accordance with His Divine Will.

Have you observed a multi - coloured fragrant beautiful flower? Who has bestowed it with that fragrance and how have these colours combined in it? Suppose you tried to perfume a flower so that it would diffuse fragrance from morning to evening, and to paint it in all colours so that it would not lose colour so long as it exists. How hard would it be for you, and how far would your attempt be successful? If all people on earth busied

themselves with such a task with all flowers growing on earth or in the sea, could they perform it? And even if they could, what time and effort would be left for other activities?

Yet millions of flowers on earth grow scented, coloured and pleasant. Allah has created all without the least effort or distraction from directing the immense universe, for He (Glory be to Him!) only says to a thing: "Be! And it is". For Him, it is so easy.

The phenomena of death and life also attract man's attention to the miraculous Divine Power that gives life and death. What is life in reality? It is a marvellous secret which no one can explain. All that man has so far attempted is the interpreta-

tion of some phenomena of life such as movement, growth and physiology. As for life itself - what is it? How does it exist in living things? How does it direct them to fulfil their functions? All this is a vague mystery incomprehensible to man. Man, especially biologists, has employed all his scientific knowledge to create one cell of billions of living cells with which the divine creation abounds, but all was in vain.

As for man's livelihood, whether in the form of rain falling from the sky; crops growing from earth; fish, birds and animals; treasures and minerals underground; the air we breathe; the wind driving ships on the sea; or power driving machines such as steam power, electric power; atomic energy, the power of fuel or of water falling down from mountains - who,

other than Allah, provides all these? "Lo? Allah, He it is that gives livelihood, the Lord of unbeatable might". (Qur'an, 51:58)

Man yearns after the unseen which only Allah knows, but all his attempts fail. He longs to know what is in store for him in his future life, what his lot will be next year, what is going to happen to him a month or a week or a day later and what is going to take place in a moment. He cannot discover what is going to take place in a moment, whether good or evil. Who, other than Allah alone, enjoys omniscience, since He has created everything and nothing in the heavens and the earth escapes His infinite knowledge?.

Many things impress the human mind, awakening it to the idea of the One God,

with no partner. It perceives that He alone possesses perfection, might, glory, greatness and limitless power.

" He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him." (The Holy Quran 112:1-4)

Thus, man would enjoy righteous nature and be an upright believer.

But the human nature sometimes suffers from derangement and relapse. The faculty of perception may be dulled; so man fails to perceive the signs of inimitability in the universe and life. He forgets the miraculous power that gives livelihood, controls events and possesses comprehensive knowledge of the seen and the

unseen.

When man undergoes a new experience, all his senses will be alert to it. If he notices a scene or hears something new for the first time or goes to a new town, street or house, he will be careful to recognise the details of the new place. He is highly impressed since it is new to him; but as he grows familiar with the scene or place and sees it several times, his senses no longer pay much, or perhaps the least, attention to it.

Sometimes man behaves likewise towards Allah. He forgets that Allah is the Creator, the Director, the Giver of life and death. He overlooks the multitudes of signs in this universe. He neglects to observe the rising sun and light until they are

swallowed up in the dark. He fails to notice the fragrant, beautiful flowers with joyous colours and the melodious notes of song -birds. He ignores thunder, lightning and rain falling from the clouds. He disregards the new-born baby and the dead man. He forgets about his complete weakness in relation to the absolute power of Allah.

Other things may dull man's senses - He may be busy with his food, drink, whims and transient worldly comforts, which would divert his mind from considering the portents in the universe, seeking Allah's favour and remembering the Hereafter and the reckoning and retribution in it.

Another cause of dull perception may

be deviation from Allah's orders. Man would be rebeilious against Allah on earth and follow his own lust - He would go beyond what Allah allows him to do because of his greediness and his desire to have mastery over others and make them slaves to his desires; so he encroaches upon their property, honour or blood and wants to deify himself so as to be worshipped beside Allah. He may be too proud to serve Allah , or he may be fascinated by what he possesses - his talents, health, power, money or anything Allah has bestowed on him. He thinks he has acquired them by his own power and forgets that all these bounties emanated from Allah.

The human perception or mind gets dull owing to one of the afore-mentioned reasons or to other deviations and relapses;

so it forgets Allah wholly or ascribes a partner to Him and imagines that someone or something in the universe shares divinity, majesty and power with Allah. Thus, the human nature gets corrupt and is possessed by Satan, who drives it away from Divine Guidance and Favour. Yet, Allah does not let His servants go astray; so He sent them Prophets to call them to guidance and turn them back to truth. He has sent Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) as the last prophet to be a harbinger of good tidings and a warner to all mankind up to the Day of Resurrection.

He revealed to him the Qur'an and guaranteed its preservation," Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder (i.e.the Qur'an) and Lo! We verily are its guardian".

(Qur'an, 15:9).

The Qur'an includes all that is essential for human nature to be noble and virtuous, guides to the real meaning of divinity and acquaints with the Rightful God, Creator and Director of the universe, Owner of Sovereignty without any partner.

MESSENGERS OF ALLAH

One of the fundamentals of faith is the belief in the Prophets (messengers of Allah). A man cannot be considered a Muslim or a believer unless he believes that Allah sent to mankind Prophets from among themselves, who conveyed the Truth revealed to them from their Lord, ALLAH, brought them good tidings, warned them, expounded and interpreted Allah's message for them. Hence, man will be considered a Muslim only if he believes in all prophets and that they all brought the same truth from Allah, without making distinction between any of them.

"Say (O Muhammad): We believe in Allah and that which was revealed unto us

and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ismael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered". (Qur'an, 3: 84)

Why has Allah enjoined belief in the Prophets and made it a fundamental of faith besides belief in Him, though the belief in Allah is the basis of everything? The answer is obvious. How can man know his Lord and worship Him in the right way without the Prophets and their guidance? Consider the falsehoods of mankind concerning their Lord throughout history, how they imagined Him and worshipped Him in their various ages of pre-Islamic paganism. Once they ima-

gined Him in the form of the sun's disc, as was the case with ancient Egyptians; once in the form of superman, as did the Greeks and Romans; once in the form of the moon, another in the form of a star and still another in the form of an idol. So fancies differed and all strayed from the true god because they sought guidance from their own imagination, desires and limited knowledge and didn't follow the truth in the right way as confirmed by Allah, that is through Prophets to whom the Truth had been revealed.

No less wrong was the perception of various times of ideological ignorance when there were small gods besides the Lord of lords who enjoyed some of His traits, such as a god of rain, another of lightning, another of thunder, another of

the wind, another of the sea (Neptune) as another of fertility, another of progeny and others of every affair of life.

If we believe that Divinity and Lordship are the major issues in the life of man man and that the worship of Allah is the object of human existence: "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me ." (Qur'an,51:56), then, we will understand why belief in the Prophets is a principal constituent of faith; for as we have seen in historical reality, it is impossible for humanity to be guided to the truth with regard to divinity and worship through other than the right and authorized source, that is - the prophets sent by Almighty Allah.

The same applies to the necessity of be-

lief in all prophets without distinction whatsoever between any of them. They all came for one purpose. They were sent to make it known that there is only ONE GOD in the whole universe, that is Almighty Allah (Be He glorified and high exalted!) with no partner.They said to people, "Serve Allah! Ye have no other god but Him". (Qur'an, 11:50, 11:61, 11:84).

So, what is the meaning of believing in one prophet and denying another? In fact, denying any of them is the same as denying them all, since they expounded to men the same thing revealed to them by Allah:

"We sent no messenger before thee but we inspired him (saying): There is no god Save Me (Allah), so worship Me". (Qur'an, 21:25)

THE MESSEGE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD(Peace be Upon Him)

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Pre - Islamic Times:

Before the advent of ISLAM all mankind had degenerated into the worst of states and the darkest of stages.

Not only Arabia was predominated by such pagan ignorance; the whole world suffered from it. There were two 'great' states: Persia and Byzantium; they ruled most of the world at that time. Either had a historic 'civilization', but what was its basis and what was the mental, psychological and material standard of its people?

In Persia a 'Khosrau' ruled. He was not merely a ruler; he was a 'god'. The cere-

monies of greeting were nearest to those of worship. People were really slaves to that god, living - whatever their rank and class was - in the way that Khosrau or his inherited royal traditions would allow. Only a 'handful' of people enjoyed the riches of the country - that is, the court of Khosrau that held sway over the masses; while the latter were in an abject state of poverty, slavery and humiliation. The aspects of 'pomp' and 'civilization' were all confined to the palace. As for the 'people', they were important as far as they served the interests of these ruling masters with that 'god' at their head. Yes, there were arts and material production, but all was used, along with people, for the sake of those interests. The official worship was that of fire. Morals had collapsed and Mazdek's communism and permissiveness,

dissolution and anarchy had spread. What mental, spiritual and material contempt man- under that 'great' civilization - had lived in!

In Byzantium conditions were no better. Caesar was surrounded with the same haloes as Khosrau, and people were, as in every state of ideological ignorance, masters and bondsmen. These bondsmen fought and died in great numbers only in the cause of the 'Empire' and the personal glories of Caesar and his commanders. Like Persia, there were arts, material production and building, but for whose sake: The masters or the bondsmen? Are there for bondsmen other than serving their masters? There was a creed! - a pagan creed guarded by the church and the clergy: God is One of three! Christ was

the son of God! Bishops and monks were lords ruling the domain of minds and spirits contrary to God's revelations and taking the property of people unlawfully; whereas, Caesar was ruling the physical domain in accordance with the Roman Law (i.e. not in accordance with Divine Law). People were servants of the court on the one hand and servants of the Pope and his bishops and monks on the other.

Beyond the 'great' empires there were the Chinese and Indian 'civilizations' in Asia.

In India, as everywhere else, there were lords and bondsmen. But bondsmen there had a peculiar position. They were believed to have been created from the god's foot, so they were considered unclean.

They had to endure all humiliation, contempt and torture they underwent; for on the one hand, that was their fate; and on the other, it was their sole way to salvation through transmigration of souls. Man, according to them, spends his fixed life, then his soul passes into another new body. If the enslaved untouchables were satisfied with their fate, surrendered to humiliation and carried out the hardest and dirtiest pieces of work, their souls might pass into other persons superior to slaves and get thereby to their pursued salvation, though they wouldn't acquire the rank of their masters who were created from the deity's head or arm!

There were countless forms of worship offered to countless deities, but they had one thing in common, that is - ERROR.

Perhaps the most curious thing was 'temple prostitutes' who stayed in temples for the sake of deity! No, for the sake of Satan! But stranger still might be the 'cow worship' - men wallowing in its dung and bathing its urine, for the sake of god's blessing! If the cow could have spoken it would have laughed at its worshippers and would have been surprised to see man, whom Allah has honoured, satisfied with such degradation!

At the end of the earth there was China, a vast expanse of land ruled by an emperor - sacred like all rulers of the time. Rites of worship and sacrifices were offered to him and people prostrated themselves before him. The god worshipped was Buddha, whose images were graven and worshipped by people. In Buddhism, as in

the Indian religions, the body was despised and tortured for the redemption of the soul, and worldly life was scorned and rejected for the attainment of immortality. Immortality! But where? and in what form? It is immortality with Buddha in the world of imagination. There were arts, material production and 'wisdom' but all was of no avail, for people themselves were lost.

Arabia was drowned in religious ignorance, like the rest of mankind. There were three religions, all of which were misguided. Jews, who were living in the outskirts of Medina, had distorted their 'holy' book centuries before, stuffed it with lies and legends, changed the Divine Revelation and renounced it wholly, complying with their whims and interests.

There were, also, small Christian groups who held false beliefs, such as the Trinity, the deification of Jesus or considering him a son of God. Arab idolators throughout Arabia worshipped idols which were placed inside AL-KA'BA, the Holy House of God (Allah), the place which Abraham and Ismael had been ordered by Allah to build in order that Allah alone should be worshipped without ascribing any partner to Him. Yet, they claimed they were followers of Abraham. A variety of myths had nested in their minds. Angels, for example, were the daughters of Allah and they were worshipped on that account. The jinn (i.e. genies) belonged to Allah and were, therefore, worshipped. Idols were carved and then worshipped by people. Many new-born girls were buried alive for fear of shame

or poverty. Women were scorned and wronged. Wine was drunk, games of chance (i.e. maysir) were used to, and adultery was allowed. Life was spent in drinking, amusement and plundering raids. 'Man' was 'Lost' as was his case in all states of religious ignorance. That was the state of the world before Muhammad was sent to save mankind from the darkness of error:

The Mission:

In this extremely dark atmosphere there shone a Light; it was Muhammad, son of Abdullah, (peace andblessing of Allah be upon him).

The Jews in Medina, before the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), had

often said to its inhabitants, 'The time of a prophet has almost arrived. We shall fight with him against you and defeat you'. The Jews, in fact, depended in their claim upon the Torah, which indicates that the old copies of the Torah not only mentioned Prophet Muhammad's name and description, but also pointed to his prophethood and its approximate time.

In his 'Muhammad in the Bible', Prof. Abdul Ahad Dawud, former Bishop of Uramiah, quotes the following verses from Haggai, ii; 79, which he has translated from an Assyrian copy of the Bible, 'And I will shake all nations and the Himada of all the nations will come - and in this place I will give shalom, says the Lord of hosts'.

The word 'Himada' is derived from an archaic Hebrew or rather Aramaic root 'hemed'. In Hebrew 'hemed' is generally used in the sense of great desire, covet, appetite and lust. In Arabic the verb 'hamida' means 'to praise' and so on. What is more praised and illustrious than that which is most craved for, coveted and desired. Whichever of the two meanings be adopted, the fact that Ahmad is the Arabic form of Himda remains indisputable and decisive. The Qur'an (61: 6) declares that Jesus announced unto the people of Israel the coming of an Apostle from Allah whose name was to be 'Ahmad'.

The Gospel of St. John, being written in Greek, uses the name 'Pariclytos', a barbarous form unknown to classical Greek

literature. But 'Periclytos', which corresponds exactly with Ahmad in its signification of 'illustrious', 'glorious' and 'praised', in its superlative degree, must have been the translation into Greek of 'Himda' or probably 'Hemida' of the Aramaic form, as uttered by Jesus Christ. Alas! there is no Gospel extant in the original language spoken by Jesus.

As to the etymology and significance of the Hebrew words 'shalom' and 'shalama', and the Arabic words 'salam' and 'Islam', I (i.e., Prof. Abdul Ahad) need not detain the reader by dragging him into linguistic details. Any semitic scholar knows that 'shalom' and 'Islam' are derived from one and the same root and that both mean peace, submission and resignation.".

Allah chooses His prophets from the best of mankind. And Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) is the best of humanity in general, and of prophets in particular. Allah takes care of,and refines His prophets before charging them with prophethood and without their knowledge or expectation. They would thereby be, psychologically, spiritually and morally, more qualified to carry out their message and fulfil the task as fully as Allah wills. This applies to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) to an extent unequalled before. Even in his early youth, he had the manner of a solemn deep-think-ing man and enjoyed the noble feelings of 'man'.

The Pre-Islamic period was full of corruption, pleasure-seeking and waste of time, though there were some respectable, sober men here and there, but they were rarely young men; for a young man would be unusual if he didn't seek pleasure and entertainment at that time. If he added to his solemnity the avoidance of liquors which were drunk even by respectable old men, shunning of those idols set up beside the Holy Mosque (i.e.Ka'aba), keeping away from inequity, along with other noble qualities, he would undoubtedly draw others' attention since none of the old men possessed such qualities, not to speak of the youths.

One of his traits was so outstanding and

deep-rooted that it attracted the attention of Qurayshi people - that was honesty. They used to call him "the Honest" (Al-Amin). People trusted him with their property owing to their confidence in his honesty and trustworthiness.

Muhammad's silence during the meetings of Quraysh, his wisdom and equanimity when he talked, won their respect and admiration; so they consulted him about their affairs and were satisfied with his counsel. The most famous event in this regard was the appeal of Quraysh (i.e. Makkans) to him for a decision concerning the Black Stone. They had decided to rebuild the Holy Ka'aba twice its former height because of the ruin of some parts of it. They worked together. But they differed about the Black Stone;

for each tribe competed with the others to enjoy alone the honour of putting it back in its place. They almost fought with each other, but at last agreed to take the counsel of the first man to come to them. That first man was the HONEST (i.e., Muhammad), who took off his mantle spread it on the ground, put the Black Stone on it and asked a man from each tribe to carry with him the mantle holding its edges.Then he took the Stone in his hands and put it in its place. All went away satisfied with the Honest's decision.

In his wife Khadija's (May Allah be pleased with her) description of him, soothing his fears on receiving the first revelation, she gave a portrait of his manners and their impression on people's minds. She said to him, 'Surely, Allah

never will discredit you! You are kind to your relatives, truthful, protecting orphans, generous to the poor, hospitable and helpful to the victims of misfortune!'

He was, during the hours of silence, much given to meditation. He spent a month of retirement every year in Hira' cave on top of the Mountain of Light (in Arabic, Jabal-un-Nur), in worship of Allah in accordance with Abraham's monotheistic religion, away from the distortions added through prevailing idolatrous ignorance.

Allah was preparing him for the serious task - for the Message addressed to the whole humanity. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (PBUH) told the truth when

he said: "My Lord has disciplined me in the best refined manner".

The Prophet Muhammad's character is the greatest character throughout human history, unmatched by any other character, not only amongst great men, but also amongst prophets. If we are to judge by the standards of human greatness, let us consider the case of a political leader, dedicating his life to political leadership. He found his nation dispersed, with no common cause or link, and was able, by means of his wise leadership and impressive character, to unite the divided nation and found the link which firmly connected its various warring factions. He drew for it a purpose which united it and removed its differences, Then he raised it to a lofty, respectable

position among other nations. Shouldn't we call him a 'great man', though he was devoted merely to such a task?

What if this was only one aspect amongst many others enjoyed by the great prophet's character?How if he has excelled every other specialist politician, though the latter was devoted to such a task?

Suppose there were a social reformer who found injustice and corruption predominant; therefore, he took it upon himself to establish social justice and eliminate perversion and decay from society. He realized balance between the individual and society, between the ruler and the ruled, and caused the rich to sympathize with the poor, so that the whole community lived as if it were one large family.

Isn't such a man really GREAT?

How if this was one part of Muhammad's character? How if he, in this regard, surpassed those specialized in this field?

Suppose there were a moral reformer who found moral corruption prevalent in his society and devoted himself to the improvement of social manners. Through his patience and struggle he was able to lay down an ethic (moral code) that ruled their conduct, so that lying, drinking, adultery and gambling disappeared; an owner felt his property was secure even if he was a weakling, an orphan or a woman; and conscience ruled human relations. Won't we agree that such a man was truly a great one?

How, then, if that was only one side of the outstanding character of the Prophet, and his influence was greater than that of any reformer in history who was devoted to his career?

Suppose, too, there were an educator who devoted himself to education and was able to bring up a generation of extraordinary people, everyone of whom was a leader in his domain of activity and an example of good conduct and towering personality, as firm as a mountain and of noble character. Dosen't such a man deserve to be called a great educator? How, then, if this was only one of several aspects of the Prophet, who excelled in this respect even the greatest of educators in history, especially with the generation he had educated to introduce

summit leaders in every field of life?

Suppose there were a military commander, who devoted himself to his career and brought up an army of heroes - soldiers and commanding officers - accustomed to endurance of inconvenience, steadfastness in adversity and daring despite danger. He led them in battles and won. They obeyed his orders and instructions and raced to places of danger seeking martyrdom. Shouldn't he be described as a great commander?

If such a commander had trained his soldiers not only to acquire individual manners, but also to fight in the cause of ideals and values, would it suffice to describe him only as a great leader?

How then, if the gracious Prophet had exceeded in this respect every other military commander throughout human history, and this was only one aspect of the various aspects of his great chartacter?

Suppose a man gave himself up to worship. His spirit was highly pure, and his heart always remembered Allah, whether in his prayer or work, in private or in public. So he was friendly to other people, sincere in his work, and ruled completely by fear of Allah and observance of His orders. . Suppose such a man were able to collect a number of worshippers of Allah and bring them up to develop a strong relationship with the Almighty. They would remember Him (Allah) in all circumstances and would be influenced by faith in all their deeds, thoughts and

feelings. Their love and fear of Allah were stronger than all earthly pleasures and temptations. Should we not say he was a great soul in himself and a great teacher to his companions?.

This and others were parts of the gracious Messenger's character in which he was superior to those persons devoted to, and specialized in them. What are we to call the man who combines in his gracious person all those personalities, each of which would be sufficient to make him great ?

The greatness of Muhammad (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) does not lie only in the combination of those several personalities in his own person; in fact, he enjoyed a superior degree of greatness -

that is, those aspects did not divert him from each other. Political activity did not distract him from military, social, moral, educational or spiritual tasks. Even all those did not distract him from his family, so he was a perfect husband and father.

If we compare the character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with that of the other prophets we will grasp his superiority to them. All the great qualities enjoyed by them separately were all infused in his great personality par excellence. Noah was known for his endurance of his folk's obstinancy; Abraham (Ibraheem, in Arabic) for his clemency; Moses for his wise leadership of the sons of Israel; Jesus Christ for his spiritual aspect against the prevailing materialism. But Muhammad's character embodied all those characteris-

tics and his influence was much greater in every one of those aspects. He was the final of prophets and his message was the epitome and the crowning of prophethood.

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah tells us:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed my favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam". (Qur'an, 5:3)

So the message of Islam confirms belief in all previous prophets and revelations. Jews disbelieved in Jesus Christ and Muhammad. Christians disbelieved in Muhammed and believed in Jesus Christ, not as a messenger but as a god or son of Allah. It is the Muslims alone who

believe in all prophets from Adam through Noah till Muhammad (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon them all). Both Jewish and Christian nations are unfit to rule humanity, for they cannot get rid of hatred and prejudice.

Only the Muslim nation is well qualified for the leadership of mankind (it led mankind once for several centuries) because it is the only nation that rules without any hatred owing to the Divine guidance that made it fit for leadership, especially its belief in previous prophets of Allah without discrimination or malice whatsoever. Moreover, the message of Islam is addressed to the whole mankind.

Allah (SWT) addresses Muhammad:

"We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples". (Qur'an, 21:107)

According to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him), "Every prophet before me was sent to his own people, but I have been sent to the whole of mankind".

It is also an all - embracing message. Earlier messages were limited to certain aspects of human life, and were limited in space as well. All of them included the major question of divinity (i.e. belief in the 'Oneness of God' and offering Him pure worship). they also included instructions and rules that suited the conditions and circumstances of each nation and aimed at the betterment of morals and the elimination of corruption.

The stage had come when the human mind was mature enough to accept a world religion which would last on earth till the Day of Judgement; such a world message must embrace, too, all human requirements in all fields of life, which is true of the Message of Islam. For it includes, like other messages, the major question of Divinity which is essential for the integrity of human life, and also canons and laws ruling all aspects of life: economic, political, social, intellectual, spiritual, ethical, etc. But it never opposes scientific progress. In fact, it was ISLAM that moved Muslims to set out a great scienific movement, the most important effect of which was the experimental method of scientific research which Europe learned from the Muslims in Andalusea, North Africa, Sicily and

South Italy, and upon which our present scientific renaissance has been based.

HOLY SCRIPTURES
(The Books of Allah)

Allah, Glory be to Him, provided every one of His prophets with books which He revealed to them. Those books or scriptures contained the tenets and fundamentals of religion as well as the instructions and commandments of Allah conveyed to various nations through His Messengers. The holy books were meant to be records of religion so that the various people and nations of the world might refer to them to know the ordinances and laws revealed by Allah and comply with them.

On the one hand, we are required to believe in all revealed books at large. On the other, we are required to believe in certain

books which Allah told us He had revealed, namely:

1. The Qur'an, revealed to Muhammad;
2. The Gospel, " " Jesus;
3. The Psalms, " " David;
4. The Torah, " " Moses;
5. The Tablets of Ibrahim, (i.e., Abraham) and Moses (May peace and blessing of Allah be upon them).

Although books revealed to prophets before Muhammad (the last Messenger of Allah) were just temporary revelations each addressed to a particular tribe or nation, yet it is incumbent upon Muslims to believe in them in general, and in the Qur'an on detailed basis in particular. The Qur'an is the final and compre-

hensive Scripture. It is the only book of Allah which has remained free from distortion and change, and has been transmitted to us whole in the most reliable ways and in its original text - a feature not enjoyed by any of the earlier books of revelation.

The miracles brought by earlier Prophets had been transient, so to say, and for that very reason, rapidly forgotten, while that of the verses (of the Qur'an) may be called "The Permanent Miracle". Its activity has been unceasing. Everywhere and at all hours, each believer, by reciting the verses, helped to realize the miracle, and in this can be found the explanation of many conversions, incomprehensible to the European who unfortunately knows little or nothing of the Qur'an. He may also judge it on the basis of inaccuracies fed to him through anti-Islamic media. The wonderful charm of this Book, resembling no other masterpiece of the literature of mankind, need not be explained to us, Muslims, because we consider that it

emanates from the words of Allah Himself, sent down through the mouth of His prophet.

In this connection, it may be interesting to quote the opinion of Savary, a celebrated orientalist, who was the first to translate the meaning of the Holy Qur'an into French. He says, "Muhammad was learned in the study of his language, the richest and the most harmonious in the world, and which, by the composition of its verses, permits thoughts as they soar to be correctly described.... Poets were greatly looked up to in Arabia.

Labid Ibn Rabyah, an illustrious poet, nailed one of his poems on the door of the Temple of Makkah (Al Ka'bah). His reputation and the value of his work kept

all competitors away. None came forward to compete for the prize.... The second chapter of the Qur'an was then placed by the side of the poem. Labid, although a worshipper of graven images, was seized with a fit of admiration after reading the first verses and confessed himself vanquished".

He became a convert very soon after and one day, his admirers being desirous of gathering together his complete works, questioned him of this subject. 'I have no recollection of any of my poetry,' he replied, 'for my entire memory has been absorbed by the verses of the Book of Revelation'.

As for the Arab of Hijaz, comprehending the most subtle hints of the language of

the Qur'an - his own language - and who welcomed the Surahs as they came out from the lips of his fellow - countryman: the genial, inspired Messenger of Allah (PBUH), that listener was overwhelmed by such sudden surprise that he remained as if petrified. Could this supernatural language come from Muhammad (PBUH), known to be completely illiterate and possessing no other knowledge than that due to nature and intuition? This seemed perfectly impossible. The Arab was therefore forced to admit that Muhammad's words were dictated by the Almighty.

Utbah Ibn Rabiyah, one of the noted idolators - known for his mastery of Arabic - having heard some verses of the Qur'an from Muhammad, said to his

companions, "By our gods! I've never heard anything like it before. It is neither poetry, nor sorcery, nor magic".

Allah had challenged idolators several times to imitate the Qur'an or compose ten Surahs or even a Surah resembling His:

"If thou art in doubt about what We have revealed unto Our servant, then bring one Surah like it of thy devising, and call to thy aid thy witnesses beside Allah, if ye are men of truth". (Qur'an, 2:23)

Eloquent men of letters, Arab and others, could not stand up to the challenge for fourteen centuries.

Besides the literary miracle, there is the

legislative miracle which becomes clear after reviewing man-made laws during the thirty past centuries - that is, since the existence of historical records which can be referred to up till the present.

We take for example the contemporary laws which are claimed to be the most mature in human history owing to the tremendous development in human knowledge, and scientific and material progress. Both blocs, Eastern and Western, deny man's complete submission to Allah's Law. So legislation in the Capitalist West is for the sake of capitalism at the expense of the working class, and in the Communist East in the interest of the ruling power at the expense of the people, which means that justice is missing in both laws. In the Western bloc, constitutions are

interested mostly in the political aspect of the people's life; in the Communist bloc in the economic aspect.

Both neglected completely the spiritual, ethical and family codes. Western laws consider the individual so holy that they cause the community to disintegrate morally and socially, whereas the communist constitution sanctifies the community (in fact, the State) in such a way as to crush the individual's character.

The constitutions of both blocs do not lay down firm international laws; they are changed according to political circumstances. Besides, the moral element is either missing or very weak in most of those constitutions; the interests of the ruling class are always dominant.

In contrast, the miracle of the Qur'anic Legislation is easily obvious. At the very beginning, the Qur'an decides that Allah alone is entitled to legislate. This proves the justice of this legislation because Allah has no interest in wronging people or partiality to one class against another. Allah is also Well - Aware of the welfare of His creatures, who would be ruled by His Law on the basis of equality.

The Qur'anic Law comprehends all fields of human life with the same degree of importance. The Qur'an has never neglected any aspects of life, nor has it allowed one aspect to outbalance others. The phenomenon of comprehensiveness and balance is one of the most outstanding features of Islam and Islamic Legislation in all domains.There is a complete balance

between the individual and society, for both have rights and duties and neither has a sacred existence at the expense of the other. Allah is the Lord of all, and all are equal in His service.

The Islamic Law includes fixed international codes in peace and war. The moral element is an essential part of the law, whether in politics, economics, society, family organization, or individual relations and transactions.

An example of the Islamic application of law is that relating to the prohibition of liquors. All 'civilized' countries couldn't stop liquor addiction. But the Islamic com-community is the only one in which liquor drinking has lessened to the lowest degree, because the Islamic Law is based on

belief, while non-Islamic Laws are based on power.

Another aspect of the Qur'anic miracle is the scientific one. The Qur'an spoke about universal and scientific facts unknown to Arabs or any other nation at the time of its revelation. It is only lately that science has discovered some of those facts.

This proves unmistakably that Allah is the Revealer of the Qur'an and no man could ever compose it. In fact, the Qur'an is not a book for teaching chemistry, geometry or medicine; rather it is a Book of Guidance. Yet it points to the Laws of Creation and facts of science. Allah, the Creator of man and everything, has told that He would uncover to men, especially learned men and scientists, the clear

signs in the Qur'an in order that they may prove the truthfulness of the Message of Islam.

> " Soon will We show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth) and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth . Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things"?
> (Quran, 41:53)

1) "We made from water every living thing'. (Qur'an, 21:30)

Water is essential for life.No other liquid is suitable for biological interactions. It has been proved by some researchers that some bacteria can live without air, but not without water.

2) "And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive sign. From what is within their bodies, between excretions and blood We produce, for your drink, milk, pure and agreeable to those who drink it." (Qur'an, 16:66)

After the recent development of anatomy and magnifying instruments, biologists studied milk formation and found that digestive enzymes change food into excretions that flow through the small intestines, where blood vessel absorb dissolved alimentary substance which is carried by blood to the lactic glands that absorb lactic matter from blood. Thus milk is formed from between excretions and blood as mentioned in the Qur'anic verse.

3) The Qur'an points to the stage of embryonic development in the womb:

"Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay)
Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed
Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made (foetus) lump; then We made out of the lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the Best to create"! (Qur'an, 23:12-1

Foetal science and anatmoy have discovered those states of creation only in the present age.

4) "Those whom Allah (in His plan) willeth to guide, He openeth their breast to Islam whom He willeth to leave straying, - He maketh their breast close and constricted as if they had to climb up to the skies."
(Qur'an, 6:125)

After man was able to fly and go up in the upper layers of atmospheric air, he discovered that the higher he went up, the less oxygen and atmospheric pressure there would be, which would cause a great difficulty in breathing and constriction in the bosom. That is what the Verse has stated thirteen centuries before the flight of man.

5) "Or (the unbeliever's state) is

like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds; depths of darkness, one above another."
(Quran, 24:40)

Before AD 1900, people had known only one kind of waves seen on the sea's surface. Scandinavian sailors came later to discover a fact hidden in the ocean's depths where there is another kind of waves which tosses divers as the upper waves that toss swimmers. Allah revealed this fact unto the illiterate Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) who had never seen the sea in his life, about fourteen centuries ago.

6) "Does man think that We can-

not assemble his bones? Nay,
We are able to put together in
perfect order the very tips of
his fingers". (Qur'an, 75:3-4)

Which is more difficult: the re-creation of bones or finger-tips? Both may look the same at the first look. But the fact is that no man's finger-tips are similar to those of anohter. So finger-prints have been used to recognize character. Only in this age has science discovered the true meaning of the indication in these verses.

THE HEREAFTER

Belief in the Hereafter is belief in the Unseen , which is known only to the Omnipotent, Omniscient Creator. Allah (Exalted be He!) says:

> "Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to us (for account)?" (Qur'an, 23:115)

> "Not without purpose did We create heaven and earth and all between! That were the thought of the unbelievers! But woe to the unbelievers because of the Fire (of Hell)!
>
> "Shall We treat those who believe

and work deeds of righteousness, the same as those who do mischief on earth? Shall We treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn side from the right?" (Qur'an, 38:27 28)

"Shall We then treat the people of faith like the people of sin? What is the matter with you? How judge ye? " (Qur'an, 68: 35-36)

In fact, life would be absurd if there were no Day of Judgement on which all the dead will be resurrected and questioned about their deeds in this earthly life.

This can be easily realized by every-

body without need for material evidence. In this world there are many examples in which divine justice is not fulfilled and we naturally come to the conclusion that there should be some world or life other than this transient one in which all unsettled issues and deeds of injustice are brought forward in the Divine Court of justice, and the righteous and the wicked receive their just deserts. Such a Day of Judgement is extremely necessary, for we see many cruel or wicked people who are devoted to sins and wrongdoing, and yet they lead a happy comfortable life without getting their due punishment. On the other hand, there are many righteous people who lead a miserable life during which they suffer from oppression, humiliation, poverty or homelessness and at last die without being requited. Is all

this consistent with Divine Justice? Not in the least. Then there must be such an inevitable day devoted to a lasting settlement of all accounts.

But many people are blinded to this fact owing to various factors such as whims, covetousness, lack of belief and deviation from truth.

Thus, everything we do in this world, every intention we have, every move we make, every thought we entertain, and every word we say, all are counted and kept in accurate records. On the Day of Judgement, they will be brought up. People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the Heaven of Allah, where there is eternal and perfect bliss, and those with bad

records will be punished and cast into Hell.That is, in a word, the Day of Judgement and final settlement of all accounts.

DIVINE DESTINY
(QADAA AND QADAR)

Almighty Allah's knowledge is limitless and His power to plan and to execute His plans is infinite. He is also the Creator of man and his deeds. This does not in any way make man fatalist or helpless. He has endowed us with the power of mind in order that we may have the freedom and ability to think, plan and choose our own way of life. But our limited sphere of knowledge and power makes us fail to understand fully or discover Allah's wisdom and justice in what He creates or does. So we should accept in good faith and satisfaction all that Allah does, as our knowledge is limited and our thinking is based on individual or personal considerations, whereas He is Omniscient, All-Seeing,

All-Wise, Almighty - His knowledge and Justice are not limited or encompassed by the narrow horizon or sphere of man's knowledge. Allah's timeless knowledge anticipates events, and those events take place according to the exact knowledge of Allah, without forcing man to take any course of action, whether good or evil.

So man bears responsibility in so far as he enjoys the freedom to think and behave. Destiny, in so far as it concerns man's behaviour, does not bear any hint of coercion. In its Islamic import, it denotes the happening of things according to Allah's exact, infallible knowledge.

ANGELS OF ALLAH

An essential article of Muslim's faith is belief in the angels of ALLAH.

We can know about the angels and some of their attributes from the Glorious Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's traditions as these traditions are reliable, infallible authorities on the articles of faith in general, and those relating to the unseen in particular. For, as it has been proved in the present age of scientific discoveries, many unseen facts of science which were unknown in the past are now well established truths after man has acquired some means and instruments that enable him to learn about and discover many already unbelievable facts of the universe; but all that man so far knows is

no more than a drop of water compared to the oceans of the unknown.

So, as in every science or field of knowledge, we turn to those specialized or to well-informed authorities, here too, we refer to the Prophet (May peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) in matters of religion as he has conveyed to humankind the revelations and instructions of ALLAH, the Creator of everything and the best to know, with no limits to His knowledge and power as He is the Absolute, Almighty, All-Knowing and All-Seeing Creator.

According to HADITH, i.e., sayings of the Prophet (May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), ANGELS were originally created from light, as Adam

was originally created from clay. They are purely spiritual creatures who never eat, drink or sleep; their major activity is to serve ALLAH, obey His orders and glorify Him all the time. They are numerous and each of them is charged with a certain task. Gabriel, for example, conveyed the revelation of ALLAH unto Prophets. Some of them observe man's deeds and preserve a comprehensive record of them. On the Day of Judgement they will bring forth a full report on man's good or bad deeds for which he will be rewarded or punished. There are other duties of angels indicated in the Qur'an.

The creation of those great extraordinary creatures testifies to the infinite inimitable power of ALLAH. They also

stand as a good example of highly righteous and industrious servants of ALLAH to be imitated by man. At last, belief in the angels of ALLAH would enlarge man's horizons of knowledge and make him never feel lonely in the vast universe as he learns that it abounds with kind and friendly spirits that come down unto good believers with composure and comfort.

The close of our words will be: "Praise be to Allah, The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds".

هــذا الكتــاب

(باللغة الأنجليزية)

* يبحـث القضـايا الكبرى وهي الألوهيـة والكـون والحيـاة والغـاية مـن الوجـود الإنسـانـي.

* يعرِّف بخـاتمة الرسـالات من الخـالق سـبحانـه وتعالى إلى خلقه.

* ينـاقش بإيجـاز أركان العقيـدة الإسـلامية.

* يعتمد في عرضه لأركان الإيمـان على حـقـائق العلم والتـاريخ والمنطق السليم، ويلتزم أسـلوباً شيقاً وسلساً في معالجته لهذه المواضيع المهمة.

لمحـة عـن
العقيدة الإسلامية

لمحة عن
العقيدة الإسلامية

باللغة الإنجليزية

تأليف
غالب أحمد مصري